

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree...

Objective(s):

- ☀ Students will develop and conduct interviews to collect info on Christmas trees
- ☀ Students will use a dichotomous key to identify different species of trees
- ☀ Students will be able to describe ecological and community benefits of purchasing locally grown Christmas trees. I

Materials:

Wall map of PA, wall map of local area, markers, post it notes, branches of different types of trees used as Christmas trees, dichotomous keys used to identify trees used as Christmas trees, access to national ag library statistics and USDA ag statistics services, contact with local Christmas tree producer.

Procedures:

1. In early December use this lesson to introduce use of forest products. Discuss the use of tree products in decorations during the holidays.
2. Have students list where these items can be purchased. Local boy scout troop, FFA, local Christmas tree farm, retailer. Students then are assigned to investigate where these trees come from. Are they a product of PA or somewhere else? Students will then develop a series of questions on the production and marketing of Christmas trees to be used to interview local retailers/producers. Other students will research the production of Christmas trees across the state.
3. Following the collection of data, the class will tabulate there results and post them on the wall maps of the local area and the state
4. Discuss the growth and or sale of Christmas trees explaining that they are an important business in parts of PA. A guess speaker from one of the farms describing the cycle of planting, trimming and harvest would be great.

Discussion questions can include:

- What effect is there to cutting natural trees vs. farm raised trees?
- How is the forest affected by tree removal?
- Do any of the students buy live trees to be planted after they are done serving as a Christmas tree?
- How do you dispose of the used Christmas tree? What becomes of it?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of live vs artificial trees?
- Are farm raised trees a renewable or nonrenewable resource?
- What might happen if a lot of people started buying artificial trees?
- What else lives and uses the tree farm as a home while the trees are growing?

5. Students will use dichotomous keys to identify the different species of trees sold as Christmas trees. Why were these species selected for growth as Christmas trees?

Follow-up activities

1. Students develop a community survey to find out the Christmas tree purchasing trends of their neighbors. Would they pay more for a locally grown tree because of the benefits of having local tree farms?